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STATE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ANNOUNCES FIRST PROPOSITION 63 FUNDING FOR CALIFORNIA COUNTIES

SACRAMENTO - Nearly all of California's counties will receive the first wave of funding from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), which was passed by state voters last November as Proposition 63 to provide needed funding for local mental health services and programs.

"We are pleased to reach this first important milestone in the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act," said Dr. Stephen Mayberg, director of the California Department of Mental Health (DMH). "We have an unprecedented opportunity to transform California's mental health system, making it more responsive to community needs while expanding vital services and supports that will produce measurable positive outcomes."

As specified by the MHSA, these initial funds are earmarked for local Community Program Planning efforts in which counties will invite the public to help determine the mental health needs of their communities, identify the types of individuals to be served by MHSA funds and suggest specific MHSA service and support strategies.

To receive this funding, counties had to submit to DMH proposals describing a local community planning process that ensured comprehensive participation of clients and family members as well as other stakeholders, such as law enforcement, probation, social services, education and housing. Most counties have already begun holding community meetings in anticipation of receiving MSHA funding. Once the Community Program Planning processes are complete, county mental health departments will submit detailed program and expenditure proposals to DMH. While specific needs will vary from county to county, all funded projects and programs must reflect services for individuals whose mental illness has been untreated or underserved.

Nancy Peña, director of the Santa Clara County Department of Mental Health, said that the influx of funding, coupled with the public's enthusiastic response to being part of the

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planning process, has created an atmosphere of excitement and hope. Several local meetings have attracted crowds of more than 200 people.

“In my entire career in the mental health arena, I have never had both the opportunity to communicate with the citizenry at large and the resources to implement new strategies to change the current mental health system,” said Peña. “We have a responsibility to seize the moment and respond to the unmet mental health needs of many of our citizens, and that’s what we intend to do.”

Funding for the MHSA was outlined by Proposition 63, which was passed by 53 percent of voters last November. According to the law, high-earning Californians pay an additional 1 percent tax on taxable income over \$1 million. These funds are used to initiate and/or expand mental health programs for children, transition-age youth, adults and older adults, particularly those whose needed services are not covered by other funding sources or by their individual or family insurance plan.

County mental health departments can provide more information about payments to specific counties or about local planning processes.

DMH oversees a public mental health budget of nearly \$2.2 billion in the following areas: leadership for state and local county mental health departments; evaluation and monitoring; administration of federal funds; and the direct operation of Atascadero, Metropolitan, Napa and Patton State Hospitals and an Acute Psychiatric Program at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville.

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